

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada

April 30, 2004

President Bush. The Prime Minister and I will have some opening comments. We'll answer two questions per side.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm glad you're here. I've really been looking forward to this meeting because I view it as a meeting between friends and allies.

I really appreciate the Prime Minister's clear vision about the world in which we live. He understands the danger of terror. He understands the opportunity of trade, and he understands that we share values that will—that are so important, the values of freedom, human dignity. We care about the human condition. I appreciate your concern about working together to help heal those who hurt, provide medicines for those who suffer from a disease.

We've got a good friend in Canada. It's an important relationship. It's a crucial relationship, and it's one that I look forward to continuing to nurture with this Prime Minister.

Welcome.

Prime Minister Martin. Well, thank you, Mr. President. We really did have a very, very good discussion. We discussed a wide range of areas, and we're going to continue over lunch. And we're doing it within the context of our shared values and the fact that we share much more than a continent. We talked about national security and Canada's new national security policy, which makes it very clear that we're going to defend the northern half of North America, and we recognize our responsibility to those in the United States, with whom we share the continent.

We discussed a number of issues between us. We talked about—we talked about the whole question of BSE, mad cow, and I must say that the President was very encouraging. We also—

[At this point, the Prime Minister spoke in French, and no translation was provided.]

We talked about Haiti. We talked about a wide range of issues. And I must say, Mr.

President, that it's very clear that Canada and the United States, working together, we can make great progress.

Situation in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, 134 soldiers have died in Iraq this month, more than any other month. A year after you declared an end to major combat, are things getting worse in Iraq rather than better?

President Bush. First, any time you talk about somebody who died in Iraq or in Afghanistan is a moment for me to thank them and their families for their sacrifice. And their sacrifice will not go in vain because there will be a free Iraq. And a free Iraq is in the interests of our two nations. A free Iraq is in the interests of world peace, because free societies do not harbor terrorists, free societies do not threaten people or use weapons of mass destruction.

Q. Mr. President—sorry.

President Bush. A year ago, I did give the speech from the carrier, saying that we had achieved an important objective, that we'd accomplished a mission, which was the removal of Saddam Hussein. And as a result, there are no longer torture chambers or rape rooms or mass graves in Iraq. As a result, a friend of terror has been removed and now sits in a jail. I also said on that carrier that day that there was still difficult work ahead.

And we've faced tough times in Iraq, Mr. Prime Minister. We've had some tough times. We've had some tough fighting, because there are people who hate the idea of a free Iraq. They're trying to stop progress, because they understand what freedom means to their terrorist ambitions.

And so we're making progress, you bet. There's a strategy toward freedom. One of it, of course, is to continue to deal with those who are trying to stop the Iraqi people from realizing their ambitions of a free society. Whether it be in Fallujah or elsewhere, we will deal with them, those few who are stopping the hopes of many.

There's a political strategy, and the Prime Minister and I will talk about that over lunch, Mr. Brahimi's mission of putting together an entity to which we will transfer sovereignty. No, there is a strategy that will help us achieve the objective, which is a free and

peaceful country in the heart of the Middle East that is desperate for freedom and democracy and peace.

Mad Cow Disease

Q. Mr. President, you're a rancher. Is there any hope—what hope can you offer your fellow ranchers in Canada about when the border might be open to live Canadian cattle?

President Bush. As soon as possible. My administration is committed to a policy of free trade when it comes to beef. And we had a discussion about that today with—that subject today with our respective agricultural ministers or secretaries, as we call them here. And I assured the Prime Minister, I want to get this solution—this issue solved as quickly as possible. And it's in our nations' interests that live beef be moving back and forth. It's also in the interest to make sure we make decisions based upon sound science, which he fully understands.

Q. Mr. President—

President Bush. Hold on a second. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Treatment of Iraqi Prisoners

Q. What is your reaction to photos of U.S. soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners? How are you going to win their hearts and minds with these sort of tactics?

President Bush. Yes, I shared a deep disgust that those prisoners were treated the way they were treated. Their treatment does not reflect the nature of the American people. That's not the way we do things in America. And so I—I didn't like it one bit.

But I also want to remind people that those few people who did that do not reflect the nature of the men and women we've sent overseas. That's not the way the people are—that's not their character—that are serving our Nation in the cause of freedom. And there will be an investigation. I think—they'll be taken care of.

Canada's Role in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, could you tell us what you'd like to see Canada doing on Iraq, both diplomatically and in terms, eventually, of getting possibly police and troops on the ground there?

President Bush. My first answer to that is, I want to Canada to do what it feels comfortable doing in Iraq. That's—and that's what I've told the Prime Minister before. Canada is an independent nation. Canada makes—will make its decisions based upon her own judgment. The Prime Minister shares my deep desire for there to be peace in the world, and to the extent that the country feels comfortable in helping that, we're grateful.

Canada is doing a lot in Afghanistan. Canada is doing a lot in Haiti. Canada is a contributor to reconstruction in Iraq. And I am grateful to be able to talk to a friend who shares the same goal, which is affecting behavior in a way that's based upon our values of human rights, human dignity, and freedom. And we've got no better partner in understanding the power of free societies.

There's a lot of people in the world who don't believe that people whose skin color may not be the same as ours can be free, can self-govern. I reject that. I reject that strongly. I believe that people who practice the Muslim faith can self-govern. I believe that people whose skins aren't necessarily—are a different color than white can self-govern.

And the Prime Minister—I don't want to put words in his mouth—but I think he shares that great sense of optimism and possibility. And it's good to have a friend who shares that with us.

Would you like to have the First Ladies come on up?

Prime Minister Martin. I've got to say, though, I really do like sharing a press conference with you. You answer those questions perfectly. [Laughter]

President Bush. Thank you. Record that.

[At this point, a question was asked and answered in French, and no translation was provided.]

Prime Minister Martin. If you can give me just two seconds, I'm going to translate. They want it.

President Bush. Some of these guys understand French. [Laughter] Raise your hand, Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News]. [Laughter]

[Prime Minister Martin provided a French translation.]

President Bush. Listen, thank you all.

Come on up, Laura.

Mrs. Martin. How do you do?

Prime Minister Martin. Good to see you.

Mrs. Bush. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm so glad you're here.

Q. Will the next trip be down at the ranch, Mr. President, for the Prime Minister?

President Bush. This is a nice place, but the ranch is even nicer. [Laughter]

Q. You need to teach him to ride. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Martin. I'll invite him to the farm.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:53 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Sheila Martin, wife of Prime Minister Martin.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on American Indian and Alaska Native Education

April 30, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Glad you all are here. Please be seated. Thank you for coming. Welcome. I'm so pleased to have so many distinguished leaders in this historic place. I see a lot of friendly faces here. I want you to know it's a privilege to stand with you as we take an important step toward a shared objective, improving the education of all American Indian and Alaska Native children. That's what we're here to discuss today. It's an important goal.

Two people are going to be important in this, in reaching this goal—we'll reach it, by the way. My attitude is, when America sets a goal and puts our mind to it, we'll meet the goal. And two people that are going to be very important in reaching this goal will be the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, and the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, both of whom have joined me here today. Thank you for coming.

I'm also pleased that we're joined by some mighty distinguished Members of the United

States Congress, two from the Senate and three from the House, starting with the President pro tem of the Senate, Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska—thank you for coming, Senator—a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, Senator Craig Thomas from Wyoming—welcome—members of the House Resources Committee—three members are with us today, Ken Calvert of California, Richard Pombo of California, and Dennis Rehberg of the great State of Montana. We're glad you're here. I want to thank you for taking time. These guys are busy people, but obviously, they're committed to this important goal.

I appreciate the tribal leaders who are here. I see leaders from all over the country. I really appreciate you coming to—you honor us with your presence. And you honor us with your strong commitment to making sure that every child learns. It's a really important part of our mutual responsibility, isn't it? When you're a leader, you've got to set important goals and follow through on those goals. And I know you share the same goal I've got: Every child, not just a few, not just some, but every child gets the best possible education. That's what we're here to discuss today.

I want to thank the students who are with me on stage. They've set one standard, and that's the standard of excellence. And they're achieving that. They're scholars, high school scholars, soon to be university and college scholars, who are in town to participate in a science bowl. I told them we need more scientists in the country, and they picked a good area to become an expert, because there's a lot of demand for scientists here in this country that is changing because of technology.

I want to thank the teachers who are here. I appreciate you being a teacher. You know, Senator, you might not remember, but I was the Governor of Texas once. Well, of course, you remember, what the heck am I thinking. [Laughter] But my predecessor was Sam Houston. He was a Senator, a Congressman; he was the President of the Republic of Texas. It's a pretty big deal when you're the President of the Republic of Texas. He was the Governor of Texas. They asked him the most important thing he ever did in his life.